

What is "Housing First?"

A practical and cost-effective approach to ending homelessness through the belief that stable, effective housing is the primary need of homeless individuals. People get into housing first, and then other needs can be addressed.

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What is Harm Reduction?

Harm Reduction in housing means treating every tenant fairly and respectfully regardless of the choices they make.

Harm Reduction property management isn't "anything goes" housing. It is about focusing on rule violations and behaviors that compromise someone's housing rather than getting caught up in the reason that someone has violated their lease.

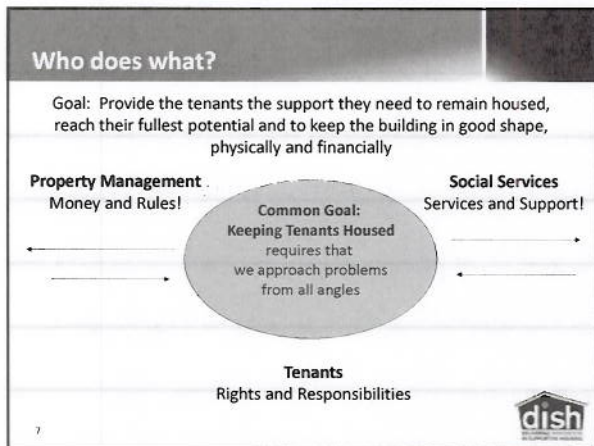
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How do we make this work?

- Coordination and clarity between the Supportive Services, Property Management and the Tenant is the key!
- Keep your eye on the goal of housing retention, including community building.
- Remember your role, and the responsibilities of each party involved, including the tenant.
- Provide training to ALL staff to ensure that they understand the goals of the supportive housing program.





Embrace Healthy Debate

- Respect different roles of each partner
- Understand all roles are necessary and important for well-managed building
- Acknowledge and use built-in tension between roles and functions to ensure stability and a sound asset

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Face Problems with Curiosity

- Talk to the person(s) who can actually do something about the issue
- Keep your discussions focused on issues, not people
- Communicate clearly and thoroughly:
 - What is the problem or issue?
 - What happened/is happening? (Just the facts!)
 - What is working or not working about the process?
 - Offer constructive solutions – or ways to identify solutions

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Areas of Overlap

- Areas of Overlap Between Property Management and Supportive Services
 - Intake: Tenant Selection and Interviewing
 - Orientation of Incoming Tenants
 - Rent Payment and Arrears
 - Dealing with Disruptive Behaviors
 - Crisis Management
 - Tenant Grievance Procedures
 - Tenant Council
 - Community Building



Property Managers in Supportive Housing

- Identifying tenants with unmet services needs – and connecting them to services staff
- Implementing a “mission driven” approach to property management – enforcing leases with the goal of keeping people housed
- Support and develop staff to provide great customer service to people with mental health and substance use issues



Key Challenges/Opportunities

- What are the challenges that Property Managers need to address to promote greater housing stability?
- What opportunities exist as we do our work and develop our services and policies?



Issues to Consider

- Creating an Effective Screening Process
- Ensuring that the “move-in process” sets the tone
- Developing Effective Lease Enforcement Protocols
- Ensuring high levels of Customer Service and Confidentiality
- Engaging Tenants and Building Community
- Educating staff about Mental Health, Substance Use and Physical Health issues
- Focusing on self care/burnout prevention for staff



Keys to Successful Screening Process

- Straightforward and easy to navigate
- Create a collaborative interview process
- Offer applicants an opportunity to state their interests and goals
- Fit the needs of the target population
- Create a fair and transparent appeal process
- Continuously evaluate the process



Typical Role of Property Management at Move-In

- Be Welcoming!
- Review Lease and House Rules
- Conduct thorough Unit Inspections
- Provide safety information
- Educate tenants re: who to call if there is a maintenance need or emergency
- Tour of the building
- Highlight opportunities for tenant input
- Emphasize on site services and tenant activities



Developing House Rules

- Specific, concrete, related to the lease
- Mirror philosophy and intent of the housing
- Create reasonable expectations
- Aid in building a supportive community
- Clear purpose
- Enforceable
- Legal
- Keep it simple



Lease Enforcement

- Notices of lease violations should be in writing and provided to the tenant promptly
- Provide facts - avoid personal statements and opinions
- Identify the lease provision or house rule that has been violated
- State the consequences of the violation and potential consequences of future violations
- Create process with support services for communicating and addressing violations



Rent Collection Procedures

- Develop clear policies and procedures for rent collection and processing
- Policies should be applied to all tenants consistently and uniformly
- Keep an accurate record
- Communication between property management, fiscal, and support services staff is essential
- Be Clear on your limits for payment plans, late payments etc.



Supporting Tenants with Mental Health Issues

- Clear and consistent boundaries
- Keep the message simple
- Don't fight perceived delusions
- Point the lease and house rules – avoid adding rules and barriers
- Provide regular training on mental health issues, de-escalation, harm reduction, etc.



Considering Eviction

- All options should be explored before resorting to eviction
- Develop an eviction policy which includes "checks and balances"
- Behavior should be documented prior to moving forward with an eviction
- Be clear about the legal requirements in your area



Housing Retention Conference

- When is a case conference appropriate?
- What is the goal and desired outcome?
- Who should be there?
- How should the meeting be conducted?
- Document any outcomes or agreements



Confidentiality and Customer Service

- Create a welcoming, non-judgmental, safe environment.
- Articulate expectations around confidentiality.
- Develop “service commitments” to clarify for staff what we mean by providing good customer service



Staff Support

- Maintain a focus on training for Property Management Staff
- Emphasize De-Escalation, Harm Reduction, Mental Health
- Ensure that self care/staff recognition is part of the organizational focus
- Create easy access to supervisors to share frustrations, concerns
- Celebrate successes



Wrap-up and Evaluation

- What have we missed?
- What are you still wondering about?
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THANK YOU!!!

